FOLLOW-UP REPORT

Submitted on:
October 15, 2009

Submitted to:
Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Submitted by:
Sierra Joint Community College District
5000 Rocklin Road
Rocklin, CA 95677
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CERTIFICATION OF THE FOLLOW-UP REPORT

This Follow-up Report is submitted for the purpose of assisting in the determination of the institution's accreditation status.

We certify that there was broad participation by the campus community and that the Follow-up Report reflects the status of the recommendations the college has been asked to address.

Signed:

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<th>Name</th>
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STATEMENT ON REPORT PREPARATION

Primary contributors to the preparation and review of this Follow-up Report include Dr. Rachel Rosenthal, Vice President Instruction and Accreditation Liaison Officer; Julie Bruno, Communications Professor, Program Review Committee Chair, and past president of the Academic Senate; Diane McKnight, interim Dean Research and Planning; Kevin Bray, Research and Planning Coordinator; Mandy Davies, Vice President Student Services; Joyce Lopes, Director of Finance; Dr. Leo E. Chavez, Superintendent/President; and Jay Hester, Academic Senate President. These individuals have participated in addressing the specific deficiencies noted in the Warning and have established the validity of the responses contained within this report.

This report addresses the two recommendations noted in the February 3, 2009 letter from the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) that continued Sierra College on Warning status. Prior to submission to the Sierra College Board of Trustees this report was prepared with input from individual faculty, managers, and classified staff, as well as the Academic Senate, the Program Review Committee, Strategic Council, the district’s primary shared governance and planning committee, and PARAC (Planning and Resource Allocation Committee), a subcommittee of Strategic Council.

In September 2009, a draft of the Follow-up Report was distributed to the entire college. Feedback regarding the report was collected from individuals, governance committees, governing board, and constituency groups. The final report was approved by President Leo E. Chavez and was submitted to the Board of Trustees for review and acknowledgement of receipt at their meeting on October 13, 2009.

Signed: ___________________________  Date: ______________
Dr. Leo E. Chavez
Superintendent/President, Sierra College
ACCREDITING COMMISSION’S FOLLOW-UP REPORT REQUEST

The Commission asked that a Follow-up Report be submitted by October 15, 2009 that provides information, evidence, and analysis regarding the resolution of the two issues noted in the Commission’s Action Letter dated February 3, 2009. These issues are noted below.


In order for the college to ensure an ongoing, systemic, and cyclical process that includes evaluation, planning, resource allocation, implementation, and re-evaluation, the team recommends the following plan development, implementation, evaluation and improvement steps:

2b Modify the budget development process in a manner that will place the college’s strategic plan priorities at the center of its resource allocation decisions (III.D.1, 1.c.)

2d Develop mechanisms to regularly evaluate all of the college’s planning and resource allocation processes as the basis for improvement (I.B.6, II.A.2.f, II.B.4, III.D.3, IV.A.5)

Commission Recommendation 1

The Commission requires the college to improve its program review process to include the analysis of the currency and relevancy of the programmatic curriculum.
RESPONSE AND UPDATE TO RECOMMENDATIONS


In order for the college to ensure an ongoing, systemic, and cyclical process that includes evaluation, planning, resource allocation, implementation, and re-evaluation, the team recommends the following plan development, implementation, evaluation and improvement steps:

2b Modify the budget development process in a manner that will place the college’s strategic plan priorities at the center of its resource allocation decisions (III.D.1, 1.c.)

2d Develop mechanisms to regularly evaluate all of the college’s planning and resource allocation processes as the basis for improvement (I.B.6, II.A.2.f, II.B.4, III.D.3, IV.A.5)

Summary
Sierra College has fulfilled the requirements of Recommendation 2 and has exceeded the Commission’s requirement to be at the Proficiency Level on the Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness Part II – Planning and attained the Sustainable Continuous Quality Level. The college has revised and implemented an annual planning and resource allocation cycle that has, as its center, the college’s strategic plan. These efforts support the development, maintenance, and enhancement of programs and services and are facilitated by a shared governance Strategic Council subcommittee, PARAC (Planning and Resource Allocation Committee), which provides a venue for focused dialogue on the improvement of institutional effectiveness and student learning; ensures that all planning efforts are linked to the college’s mission, vision, core values; and annually reviews, prioritizes and recommends district resource needs for staffing, equipment, technology, and facilities as identified in the annual ePAR (electronic Planning and Resource) process.

In addition, mechanisms are in place to regularly evaluate the college’s ePAR and planning processes, as well as provide evaluation and analysis of longitudinal data with which to assess progress toward stated district goals.

Recommendation 2b

Modify the budget development process in a manner that will place the college’s strategic plan priorities at the center of its resource allocation decisions (III.D.1, 1.c.)

PROGRESS and ANALYSIS

Since the accrediting team visit in the fall of 2008, the district has redesigned and fully implemented the annual budget development process that is based upon the district’s mission and Strategic Plan (Sierra College Mission Statement, Strategic Plan 2008-2011, Planning Calendar
What follows is a description of budget development, resource allocation, and planning process, as well as a description of how the process has been implemented, evidence of the results, and future plans for process refinement and improvement.

- Budget Development and Planning Process -

Any discussion of budget development and planning must first take into account the significance of the “Sierra College Compensation Agreement” (Sierra College Compensation Agreement). This agreement between the district and bargaining units (faculty, classified, and management) dictates the initial distribution of any new, general fund, unrestricted revenues including COLA, equalization, and growth. The formula is complex but in general sets aside 78% of new revenues for “personnel” to pay for employee benefits, step and column increases, additional positions, and overall pay increases. The remaining 22% is available for “operations” including utilities, instructional and operational supplies, maintenance and reserves. The Board policy for a balanced budget and reserves of no less than 8% are two other parameters that must be addressed in budget planning and development (Board Policy BP 6310).

Keeping in mind the above strictures, the budget development and resource allocation process stages are as follows:

Stage 1: Establish Priorities
Stage 2: Identify Resource Needs
Stage 3: Prioritize Requests
Stage 4: Review Alignment
Stage 5: Allocate Resources
Stage 6: Evaluate Results and Process

Stage 1: Establish Priorities

Each year the Board of Trustees and Strategic Council (the district’s primary shared governance and strategic planning committee) review activities and accomplishments from the prior year, assess the current state of the district, review the goals and strategies set forth in the current Strategic Plan and establish annual planning principles and budget priorities for the next academic/fiscal year. This process begins at the Board Planning Retreat in July when priorities are proposed for the subsequent year and is completed in the fall semester with final, formal approval of budget priorities (Board minutes, July 11, 2009).

Stage 2: Identify Resource Needs

Identification of resource needs begins at the departmental level with the annual electronic Planning and Resource Request, (ePAR). Every instructional, student services and operational unit in the district submits an ePAR in February for the next academic/fiscal year (Planning Calendar 6-15-09). In the ePAR, department chairs or unit leads identify short-term

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1 The college’s previous Program Assessment and Review (PAR) process, which earned a commendation in 2007, was redefined as to its role in the planning process. It was enhanced to include Strategic Plan priorities and transitioned to a web-based software program (TracDat) to improve transparency and facilitate reporting and tracking.
department/unit activities, the related Strategic Plan goals and strategies, and the staffing, equipment, technology and facilities resources needed to support learning based upon Program Review results and program outcomes assessments. Requests also include dollar amount estimates and whether the expenditure will be one-time or ongoing.

Departments write ePARs in late February after review of current year progress towards goals, current year budget updates, and department planning retreats. The activity takes place at the same time as the final information and adjustments to the compensation formula for prior year income/expenditures are completed. The authors are provided with the district funding priorities that have been established. The first information about the budget for the next year also becomes available at this time.

Stage 3: Prioritize Requests

Departmental/unit ePAR requests are forwarded to the area manager. The area manager works with the departments/units to determine which staff, equipment, technology, and facilities are most critical to achieving the goals of the district and the unit. Priorities are identified and classified by resource into Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 requests at the unit/department and division levels. Tier 1 requests are those that the area agrees are most critical and most closely aligned with the Strategic Plan priorities established in Stage 1. Tier 1 items are then rank ordered, but Tier 2 and 3 may or may not be rank ordered. These activities take place in March and April and are considered in light of the information available about the coming year budget.

The “tiered and ranked” requests for the area are next submitted to the appropriate executive, vice president, or director of the six various “branches” of the district: Instruction, Student Services, Information and Instructional Technology, Operations, Human Resources, and Presidential. Each executive level manager is then responsible for working with the area managers to do a second level of tiering and ranking of resource requests within their branch. The branch results are then evaluated by the Planning and Resource Allocation Committee on a district-wide basis and posted on the Research and Planning ePAR webpage (http://www.sierra.cc.ca.us/AboutUs/research/ePAR.html).

PARAC

PARAC is a subcommittee of Strategic Council. PARAC is comprised of nine members including the presidents of the academic, management, student and classified senates and the five executive council members (vice presidents of instruction, student services, finance and administration, human resources and the president).

PARAC was established to facilitate and provide clarity, consistency, and openness to the resource allocation process as well as enhance communication throughout the organization. PARAC provides a venue for focused dialogue on the improvement of institutional effectiveness and student learning and ensures that all planning efforts are linked to the college’s mission, vision, and core values. PARAC members have responsibility to communicate to their respective constituency groups the substance
of discussions, analysis and information, and to solicit feedback (PARAC Charter, July 27, 2009).

PARAC’s evaluations are informed by Program Review findings, as communicated by the Program Review Committee (PRC). The PRC provides in-depth presentations of Program Review findings to PARAC and PRC representatives participate in every PARAC meeting. The PRC shares in discussions and dialogue, participates in analysis, and offers advice and counsel regarding which of the resource requests are most critical to programmatic health (PRC Executive Report 2009).

Throughout the prioritization process, data and informational reports are provided for use in deliberations. ePAR reports include summaries by resource, cost, tier and rank, relationships to district goals and strategies, and budget type. These reports are distributed widely and most are available to the college community through the college web site or public folders.

Following Program Review and budget presentations, the Executive Branch Tier 1 requests are discussed and debated at PARAC relative to the priorities identified in Stage 1, alignment with the district’s Educational Master Plan, Strategic Plan, and other relevant plans. Following a series of robust, extensive, and complex discussions, a core set of the most critical district resources are identified as District Tier 1 resource needs and submitted as recommendations to Strategic Council.

Stage 4: Review Alignment

STRATEGIC COUNCIL

Strategic Council is comprised of five representatives from each of the four constituency groups: faculty, classified staff, management, and students. Strategic Council is the college’s primary shared governance planning committee and its members are charged with disseminating and interpreting policy, regulations and procedures to the various segments of the college community. (Sierra College AP 2510).

Strategic Council is charged with verifying the alignment of District Tier 1 resource recommendations with Strategic Plan priorities, Program Review results and other planning documents in late August of each year. Following alignment review, Strategic Council makes recommendations to the president regarding the district’s most critical resource needs and conveys any potential budget ramifications.

Stage 5: Allocate Resources

A proposed current year tentative budget and an overview of the final prioritized lists of resource requests recommended by Strategic Council are shared with the Board of Trustees in September. Departments are then notified of the results.

The prioritized lists of staffing, equipment, and facilities serve to guide the resource allocation decisions made during the year. As funding becomes available, those resources identified as District Tier 1 receive first priority.
The funding mechanisms differ by resource type. As an example, if a classified or management position is vacated during the year due to a resignation or retirement, a replacement request is submitted by the area manager to their respective Executive Branch lead. The vice president of human resources then confers with the appropriate branch vice president and reviews the replacement request relative to the District Tier 1 list of new classified or management positions, Strategic Plan, and Program Review findings. The vice president of human resources then makes a recommendation to PARAC as to whether the position is to be replaced or the FTE (full time equivalent) transferred to one of the positions listed on the District Tier 1 staffing list.

Full-time faculty positions requested in the ePAR each February are updated, tiered and ranked by Deans’ Council each fall in preparation for the traditional spring hiring season. The ranking of positions is reviewed for alignment with Program Review and the Strategic Plan by PARAC and Strategic Council prior to their submission to the president and the Board of Trustees (Deans’ Council Recap 10/1/09, tentatively scheduled for PARAC 10/9/09, Strategic Council 10/16/09).

The remaining resource categories of equipment and facilities follow varying protocols. Following identification as District Tier 1 equipment needs, equipment is purchased as funds allow throughout the year. District Tier 1 facilities requests are typically substantial in scope and may require long-term planning efforts such as the passage of a bond measure.

Stage 6: Evaluate Results and Process

Evaluation of the district’s planning and resource allocation process includes measuring progress towards stated goals as well as measuring the effectiveness of the process itself. Process evaluations are conducted in the fall of the year. Results evaluations take place in the late spring, or early summer of the year in preparation for Stage 1 activities. An in-depth assessment of the evaluation process follows in this document as the response to Recommendation 2d.

- 2009-10 Implementation -

Stage 1 – Establish Priorities

Concurrent with budget development and district-wide prioritization of resource requests, the following planning principles and budget priorities for the 2009-2010 year were established by the Board of Trustees (2009-2010 Principles, Priorities and Resource Allocation Criteria): ²

² For '09-'10, due to the redesign of the planning/budget process, priorities were established off-cycle in the spring of 2009. The cycle for '10-'11 is on schedule and planning priorities were established in the summer and fall of 2009 for the '10-'11 year.
Planning Principles/Budget Priorities

1. Preserve existing staffing levels
2. Achieve enrollment growth at the funded cap through scheduling courses at 1% to 1½ % over the funded cap
3. Maintain fiscal stability
4. Consider and align with all planning documents and Program Review Findings

In addition to these principles and priorities, PARAC also identified Strategic Plan priorities and criteria for resource allocations for the 2009-2010 academic/fiscal year.

Strategic Plan Priorities

1. Increase student success, with specific focus on:
   a. Distance education courses and programs (1.4/1.5)
   b. Pre-collegiate courses (1.6)
   c. Historically underrepresented students (1.7)
2. Incrementally increase the number of FT faculty (2.2)

Tier 1\(^3\) Resource Allocation Criteria

1. Compliance with mandates (i.e. federal and state mandates, educational code, accreditation standards)
2. Health and safety
3. Criticality to mission
   a. Lack of affordable alternatives
   b. Number of students impacted
   c. Number of staff/programs/departments impacted
4. Centrality to strategic planning priorities
5. Criticality to program vitality as identified in Program Review
6. Essential resource need as identified in the ePAR process

Stage 2 – Identify Resource Needs

ePAR requests were submitted in February of 2009 and are posted on the college Research and Planning Web page at [http://www.sierracollege.edu/AboutUs/research/ePAR.html](http://www.sierracollege.edu/AboutUs/research/ePAR.html).

Stage 3 – Prioritize Requests

Tiering and ranking of staffing, equipment, and facilities resource requests took place throughout the summer of 2009. The dedication of faculty and staff to meet over the course of the summer was admirable, and epitomized the collaborative spirit that is so pervasive at Sierra College. The district did support faculty attendance at both PARAC and Strategic Council summer meetings via stipends to ensure broad participation in the planning process.

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\(^3\) Tier 1 – Resources identified through the planning process as the most crucial for achieving district goals.
Results of the prioritizations were finalized in August of 2009. PARAC meeting agenda and recollections reflect the extent and complexity of the discussions. Results are posted on the college website.

**Stage 4 – Review Alignment**

In August of 2009 results of the district-wide tiering and ranking process were shared with Strategic Council and were approved as in alignment with district mission, goals and strategies, planning principles, budget priorities, and allocation criteria.

**Stage 5 – Allocate Resources**

On September 8, 2009, the Board adopted the budget, approved two specific resource allocations, and acknowledged the resource allocation process. As funding sources are identified and made available, prioritized resources from the District Tier 1 lists will be brought forward for Strategic Council and presidential acknowledgement and approval by the Board.

The enhanced planning process has resulted in substantive linkages between institutional planning, resource allocation decisions and program review and has contributed to improved transparency of the planning process. Paradigm shifts are occurring relative to the growing awareness of the criticality of planning and the required connection of all district efforts to the Strategic Plan and Program Review findings. Several key examples are listed below.

- Robust dialogue in Strategic Council during spring 2009 resulted in the identification of additional full time faculty as an identified Planning Priority for 09-10. Note: Sierra College has one of the lowest full time/part time faculty ratios in the state. (Strategic Council recollections 9/19/08, 10/17/08, 11/14/08, 11/21/08, 12/5/08, 1/16/09, 1/30/09, 2/6/09, 2/20/09, 3/6/09, 3/20/09, 4/3/09)
- College’s ongoing commitment to annually increase by two the number of full-time faculty members above the Faculty Obligation Number (Strategic Council recollections 4/3/09, Strategic Plan II.2, 2009-2010 Principles, Priorities, and Resource Allocation Criteria). Two positions hired for 2009-2010.
- Faculty collective bargaining unit, Sierra College Faculty Association (SCFA) agreement to fund five additional full time faculty positions for 2009-2010 (Strategic Plan II.2, SCFA MOU 0809-03 4/7/09). Three of the five positions have been hired; two in progress for spring 2010 start with one position a direct outcome of recent Program Review findings (Welding Technology).
- District committed significant funds to build an access road to improve egress and safety in the event of a campus evacuation (Strategic Plan II.7)
- Cancellation of the traditional Sierra College Foundation Grant Request process in lieu of utilization of the District Tier 1 resource needs lists for foundation resource development efforts (Sonbol Aliabadi, “A message from Sierra College Foundation”, email 9/1/09).
- Budget reduction analysis prepared by district managers in August utilized the 2009-2010 Strategic Planning Principles, Priorities and Criteria and Program
Review findings as a guide for identification and prioritization of potential budget reduction areas.

- Revision of the curriculum review process to incorporate the analysis of potential impact on district resources and alignment with mission
- Funding provided by Basic Skills Initiative supports multiple projects focusing on precollegiate and underrepresented student success and retention (Strategic Plan I.6, I.7)

Communications channels employed to notify the district of results of the allocation decision process during September of 2009 were:

- Email to all staff
- Posting on the college’s website
- Placement in Public Folders
- Hard copy placed in library
- Executive administrator communications to managers
- Distribution at Department Chair fall semester meeting

Stage 6 – Evaluate Results and Process

In July of 2009, at the Board Planning retreat, updated key metrics for the 2008-2009 year were reviewed and progress assessed towards the 2011 targets (2008-2009 Strategic Plan Update - Key Metrics). Activities conducted in 2008-2009 targeting goals and strategies were also reviewed and proposed planning and budget priorities for 2010-2011 developed (2010-2011 Principles, Priorities and Research Allocation Criteria Draft). In October of 2009, the Board’s proposed planning priorities for 2010-2011 were shared with Strategic Council and are targeted for approval by mid-November.

Although it is anticipated that new funds will be limited or nonexistent in 2009-2010 and possibly 2010-2011, the district will use the planning process and the identified district Tier 1 resource needs to guide allocation of any new funds received, redirect and reallocate existing resources, and to identify areas for potential partnerships and future resource development.

Despite the current fiscal crisis, Sierra College remains committed to this planning process. As such, the planning priorities were used, and will continue to be used, as benchmarks to guide and direct not only new funds, but areas for potential budget reductions as well.

FUTURE PLANS

2010-2011 Planning and Allocation Process

In addition to completing the planning and resource allocation process for 2009-2010, planning for the 2010-2011 academic year has begun. In July of 2009, the Board of Trustees reviewed progress toward strategic plan goals (2008-2009 Year End Goals Report), longitudinal data illustrating institutional effectiveness and progress toward the target metrics for 2011 (2008-2009 Strategic Plan Update - Key Metrics), and set planning priorities for the 2010-2011 year. The Board established the following priorities for 2010-2011 as noted below with their Strategic Plan
reference. These priorities will be reviewed and confirmed by PARAC and Strategic Council during the fall semester in preparation for the 2010-2011 planning cycle, which will begin in January 2010 with department planning days and drafting of the ePAR.

Sound online education (1.4)
Success in distance education (1.5)
Success and persistence in pre-collegiate courses (1.6)
Success of historically underrepresented students (1.7)
Rocklin campus facilities and infrastructure (2.7)
Broad based capital construction fund (new)

Departments conducting activities and requesting resources that support these priorities will receive a higher priority given that they are also a confirmed need by Program Review.

Planned Improvements to Planning and Resource Allocation Process

- Appropriate resource request protocol for short-term versus longer-term resource needs will be clarified
- Dedicated departmental planning days have been established for flex week of January 2010
- Planning priorities, program review findings, program outcomes assessments will be more closely linked to the development of activities and request for resources
- New and replacement resource requests will continually be evaluated against district Tier 1 prioritized lists
- Program outcomes, assessments, and proposed program improvements will continue to be collected and tracked longitudinally
- Changes in student success and retention will be linked to resource requests and allocations
- Major planning documents will be updated regularly to inform, focus and direct department goals and activities
- Strategic Plan will be reviewed to refine and reduce the number of strategies
- Improve and increase the longitudinal data used in program review
- Curriculum Committee to include and consider potential long term resource implications for new courses beginning in fall 2009
- A new Program Vitality process will provide a detailed analysis of resource and planning needs of instructional programs as identified by the Academic Senate, Deans’ Council and/or the vice president of instruction
**Recommendation 2d:**
*Develop mechanisms to regularly evaluate all of the college’s planning and resource allocation processes as the basis for improvement (I.B.6, II.A.2.f, II.B.4, III.D.3, IV.A.5)*

**PROGRESS and ANALYSIS**

Evaluation of the college’s planning and resource allocation process includes measuring progress towards stated goals as well as measuring the effectiveness of the process itself.

**Progress Towards Stated Goals**

In terms of evaluating and measuring progress towards stated goals, a set of key metrics was established with the writing of the Strategic Plan in 2008. These key metrics, related to specific strategies, were selected and performance targets for 2011 established. In July of 2009, the first annual report of progress made in 2008-2009 towards the achievement of these metrics was presented to the Board and Strategic Council (2008-2009 Strategic Plan Update - Key Metrics). An annual report is now scheduled as an agenda item at each summer Board retreat and August Strategic Council meeting to provide an overview of activities and accomplishments of the previous year, progress towards targeted metrics, and determination of planning priorities for the subsequent year.

Determination of planning priorities for 2010-2011 was discussed at the Board retreat in July. The key metrics report was used as a foundation for development of the institutional priorities for the 2010-11 year. The proposed Board priorities, determined at their July 2009 retreat, are listed again below. These priorities will be reviewed and discussed by PARAC and Strategic Council in fall 2009.

Sound online education (1.4)
Success in distance education (1.5)
Success and persistence in pre-collegiate courses (1.6)
Success of historically underrepresented students (1.7)
Rocklin campus facilities and infrastructure (2.7)
Broad based capital construction fund (new)

Divisions and departments, executive council, planning committees, PARAC, and Strategic Council will incorporate the 2010-11 priorities into their planning efforts. These priorities will also inform development and allocation of the 2010-11 budget by PARAC and Strategic Council.

One of the key metrics was program outcomes and assessments. To ensure currency and to measure achievement of student learning outcomes for courses, certificates, programs and degrees, course and program learning outcomes information has been entered into TracDat software. This software allows for longitudinal tracking and reporting of course, program, and institutional learning outcomes. Course and program student learning outcomes data was incorporated into the formal Program Review process and 100% of programs and services were evaluated for currency in late spring and early summer of 2009. Departments were asked to report and evaluate progress towards developing, assessing, and using results for program improvement. (Program Review templates 2009, A. Myers email, “Program Assessment”, 9/18/09)
**Effectiveness of the Process Itself**

Sierra is committed to systematically reviewing and modifying the planning and resource allocation process. An ongoing loop of documentation, feedback and subsequent revisions were present throughout the implementation of the new web-based ePAR last spring and during the PARAC resource request, allocation, and recommendation discussions. As issues arose or the need for changes became evident, modifications to the processes or reports were quickly made by the college’s Research and Planning Office. Feedback was also solicited by the Research and Planning Office concerning the adequacy of data and ease of use of forms provided for the Program Review and ePAR processes.

To solicit feedback on process improvement for the 2010-2011 planning process, focus group interviews were conducted with program leaders in August and September of 2009. Feedback on the planning process was solicited at the August 18, 2009 PARAC meeting (PARAC recollections 8/19/09). In addition, suggestions for process improvement for both ePAR and Program Review were solicited at the August 24, 2009 Department Chair meeting (Department Chair feedback, 8/24/09).

Formal assessment of the planning process occurred in September when annual surveys were deployed by the Research and Planning Office to all staff related to the ePAR and resource allocation processes. The results are scheduled for review by the college and the accrediting team in October of 2009. In addition, the Research and Planning Office will perform an evaluation of the allocation process, as a whole, prior to the initiation of the next cycle in the spring (ePAR Survey September 2009, Program Review Survey October 2009).

**Evaluation of Long-Term Planning**

A master schedule for the major district plans over the next 15 years has been recommended by Strategic Council to the president for adoption. This schedule includes one year for review and the subsequent year targeted for vetting and approval of any revisions to the plan (Master Planning Schedule 2009). The evaluation will include a census of each plan’s distribution as well as an evaluation of its effects on the planning process. The first plan to come up for review will be the Strategic Plan in fall 2011.

**Evaluation of Program Review**

In order to comprehensively evaluate the efficacy of program review, the committee will survey all staff involved in the process. Surveys were created for all constituencies either directly or indirectly involved in program review including: Program Review report authors, PARAC and Strategic Council members, and all staff. The results of the surveys will be examined and disseminated to all staff in October 2009.

Additional process improvements implemented since the last visit include:

- Program Review results for 100% of all programs and services have been shared with departments and appropriate governing bodies.
- Results of ePAR resource requests and recommended district resource priorities have been shared with departments and appropriate governing bodies.
• A master schedule and timeline for updating all major long-term planning documents (Educational Master Plan, Strategic Plan, Facilities Master Plan, Technology Master Plan, and Human Resources Master Plan) has been established (Master Planning Schedule, September 2009).
• A cycle and timeline for annual planning and resource allocation processes has been established and widely publicized throughout the college.

FUTURE PLANS

• Incorporate Program Outcomes assessment and planned program improvements into the resource allocation process.
• Establish assessments for institutional outcomes, incorporating improvement plans into the Educational Master Plan and Strategic Plan.
• Improve the effectiveness of ePAR and Program Review by refining the institutional definition of “program” and “department”.
• Improve the longitudinal data used in Program Review, particularly for operational and service areas.
• Conduct college and community forums for input into the next Educational Master Plan and Strategic Plan.
COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION 1

The Commission requires the college to improve its program review process to include the analysis of the currency and relevancy of the programmatic curriculum.

Summary
The college meets the requirements of Commission Recommendation 1 and has achieved ACCJC’s sustained continuous quality improvement level for Program Review. In the past year, the college has significantly revised its program review process to ensure a more robust process that assesses the currency, relevancy and effectiveness of not only instructional programs, but student services and operations as well. All programs, services and operations across the district completed program review in 2009. Additionally, the program review process has been integrated into the planning and resource allocation process and the results of program review are used to support program resource requests to improve programmatic health and student learning.

PROGRESS and ANALYSIS

History of Program Review
The first iteration of program review came in the form of the Program Assessment and Review (PAR). This report, generated by departments, served as a yearly planning and review document and received a commendation from the visiting team in 2007. Although the PAR process was embedded in practice across the district and supported planning, it was not integral to the planning process and did not necessarily ensure alignment with the strategic goals of the district. Additionally, the PAR process was challenged by a lack of feedback to PAR authors regarding their resource requests and the process only minimally assessed program vitality. It became obvious that the college needed to strengthen its elements of relevancy and currency as well as incorporating program outcomes into the process to improve student achievement and learning.

The Program Review Committee
The college incorporated several substantive changes into the program review process over the last year. The duties of the previous PAR Committee were assigned to the Program Review Committee (PRC), formed in March (Academic Senate Recollections, 3/04/09; 3/11/09; 3/18/09). Although PRC is a standing committee of Academic Senate, the committee membership includes representatives from faculty, administration, and classified staff (PRC Executive Report p.3). The committee was charged with broadening and enhancing the existing program review process and developing a new protocol to be used by not only instructional programs, but student services, operations and support offices and services as well.

Defining a “Program”
Within the first few weeks of meeting, the Program Review Committee defined what constituted a “program” for program review. Instructional departments and services were defined by PAR, and now ePAR, as they have been for decades at Sierra. While the rule of thumb "If you wrote an ePAR, you're a unit/program" may seem arbitrary for program review purposes, it captured the boundaries and identities of units and achieved wide acceptance. A subsequent review of this approach among other colleges revealed that Sierra's approach is common.
Integration into the Planning Process
The committee defined several basic assumptions of the purpose for program review. The purpose for Program Review includes:

1. Assessing currency and relevancy for all programs – instructional, student services, support services and operations
2. Ensuring the health of the institution through program vitality
3. Improving strategic planning for individual programs and the institution
4. Ensuring a planning and resource allocation process that supports student learning and student success
5. Incorporating the development and assessment of student learning and program outcomes into the planning processes
6. Strengthening the alignment of course and program outcomes for instructional programs
7. Enhancing transparency in decision making and resource allocation

A timeline was developed to allow for a comprehensive assessment of the currency, relevancy, and effectiveness of all programs in the district and thereby facilitating and informing the planning and resource allocation for the coming year (Academic Senate Recollections 3/11/09).

Report Templates and Rubric
Templates were created that incorporated the information the committee would need to evaluate the programs. Three report templates were developed: Instructional Program Review Report, Student Services Program Review Report, and Program Review Report Support Offices and Services (Program Review Templates). Data elements were provided by the college’s Research and Planning Office and information was requested to enable the assessment of the currency and relevancy of each program.

Finally, to systematically evaluate the reports submitted by the various programs in the district, a rubric was created that addressed the crucial elements: program effectiveness, program relevancy, and program currency. Programs were evaluated using both quantitative and qualitative evidence (Program Review Templates and Rubric).

Program Review Results
The support for an enhanced Program Review process was outstanding as the PRC received completed program review documents from all 130 instructional and student services programs and support offices. The PRC prepared an Executive Report which summarized the findings and presented its formal findings and recommendations to the report authors and the members of Planning and Resource Allocation Committee (PARAC), Strategic Council, and Dean’s Council in the Program Review Committee: 2009 Executive Report (PRC 2009 Executive Report).

The committee then generated a feedback report to each program that delineated the strengths and weaknesses of the program’s currency, relevancy, and effectiveness as well as provided suggestions for future reviews. In addition, a report was generated to PARAC that provided recommendations for planning and resource allocation based on the findings of the committee.
The PRC made one of three final recommendations at the end of each individual program review: Critical Attention Needed (C), Opportunity Identified (O) or Stable (S). A program review may be marked “critical attention needed” for either resource allocation or planning. If the program review was marked “critical for planning,” the recommendation was forwarded to the Academic Senate, Appropriate Educational Administrator and/or PARAC. Program reviews recommended as “opportunity identified” were deemed opportunities that would enrich or benefit student learning or the district, though these opportunities were not deemed critical. Most programs were deemed stable. “Stable” did not mean that the program does not have needs or does not deserve resource allocation. Rather, “stable” typically signified that the program was functioning well with existing resources and able to sustain currency, relevancy, and effectiveness. Furthermore, some recommendations were dependent on conditions or occurrences not yet established, such as external budget decisions or grant funding. For those recommendations, the committee attempted to anticipate possible shifts in the environment in which certain programs function. For these programs, the committee recognized that the status of the program could shift from “stable” to “critical.” (Program Review Committee: 2009 Executive Report)

Each of the programs received, in addition to their final recommendation of C, O, or S, an estimated time frame in which to update their program review. Programs deemed critical or existing in a rapidly changing environment are required to update their program reviews within one to two years. Others were requested to return in two to three years and for those programs deemed stable, three years. In fall 2009, the PRC will develop a master schedule that specifically defines the year in which each program will be required to update their program review. Programs requiring accelerated review will be given first priority in the schedule and assessed during the fall 2009 to ensure that updated program review results are available for the 2010-2011 planning and resource allocation cycle which begins in February 2010. The PRC will be available for counsel for each of the programs scheduled for the accelerated program review process in fall 2009 to provide consultation and guidance.

In addition to providing feedback to the authors and recommendations to PARAC, the committee identified strengths and weaknesses of the program review process. As stated in the Program Review Executive Report, the findings were as follows:

**Strengths of this Program Review Cycle:** This program review cycle possessed the following strengths:

1. Provided a comprehensive look at the effectiveness, currency and relevancy of all district programs: instructional, operations and student services with one hundred percent participation in the process.
2. Identified programs that are significantly challenged and in need of planning or resource allocation attention as well as programs that are stable and performing admirably with the limited resources available.
3. Identified district-wide planning and resource allocation themes.
4. Illuminated limited lines of communication between programs and centers.
5. Provided needed feedback to authors of required program documentation.
6. Clarified program needs and the reasons for those needs.
7. Shifted the district further away from a personality-based decision making process to a demonstrated student/program need-based decision-making process.
Weaknesses of this Program Review Cycle: The PRC will address these weaknesses in subsequent cycles as well as conduct annual process evaluations:

1. Confusion remains as to who is ultimately responsible for Centers’ ePARs and program reviews - the "District" or the "Center."
2. The Committee lacked sufficient data from operations programs.
3. The usefulness of division reports, "branch" reports, or reports at a high level are in question.
4. As the request for the creation and submission of this revised program review report came within the confines of one semester, the Committee recognizes the need for training for future program review report preparation.
5. The Curriculum Currency area of the form needs development and clarification.
6. There were some technical difficulties with the form itself causing a few program reviews to be written without the appropriate data being available.
7. As the entire program review cycle was being revised simultaneously, program review forms, evaluation rubrics and recommendations from the Program Review Committee were generated without clear direction from PARAC regarding the types and forms of recommendations that they would need to see.

Additionally, the PRC included in the executive summary a description of the overarching themes derived from a review of the combined program reports. The themes found from this analysis included significant technology needs, degree or certificate granting programs that lack full time faculty stewardship, resource commitments for ancillary programs such as the Natural Science Museum and the Ridley Art Gallery, and adequate resources to support program mandates.

The program review process was completed on July 1st and the Executive Report presented to the Academic Senate president, PARAC members, and report authors on July 7th. The Program Review Committee: 2009 Executive Report was internally distributed through the Program Review portal on July 10th and posted to the college website.

Evaluation of Program Review
As stated previously, in order to comprehensively evaluate the efficacy of program review the committee will survey all staff involved in the process. Surveys were created for all constituencies either directly or indirectly involved in program review including: Program Review report authors, PARAC and Strategic Council members, and all staff. The results of the surveys will be examined and disseminated to all staff in October 2009.

FUTURE PLANS
Although the surveys needed to complete the evaluation of the program review process are currently in progress, the PRC was able to identify an initial list of future actions necessary for improvement. As stated in the Executive Report:

Future Directions for the Program Review Committee: The Program Review Committee, through the process of this cycle, recognizes the following activities as vital for improving the program review process.
1. Develop a working definition of “program.”
2. Clearly delineate and educate staff about program review and ePAR differences.
3. Establish regular flex trainings for Program Review Report authors.
4. Establish an assessment process for the program review cycle.
5. Recommend that the Academic Senate, in conjunction with the district, develop a policy for program initiation and shift from program discontinuance to program vitality.
6. Work with Operations to develop a review process that includes the identification of significant data elements while clarifying what the Program Review Committee expects to see in reports from Operations.
7. Work with the Student Learning Committee to identify benchmarks for program outcome implementation for all programs.
8. Seek clarification regarding the selection process for staffing.
9. Seek clarification from PARAC regarding what data and information is significant for their process.
10. Seek clarification from PARAC and Strategic Council as to what types of recommendations they would find helpful.
11. Refine the Program Review form to better identify the data elements and information that the Program Review Committee needs.
12. Seek clarification from Academic Senate, PARAC and Strategic Council as to whether program requests for “replacement” positions should be considered in addition to program review data elements to inform the Program Review Committee’s recommendations to Academic Senate and PARAC.

The committee is currently working toward completion of these items. In addition, the PRC is creating a Program Review Handbook to capture all the information needed for a successful program review. Finally, the committee is working with the Deans’ Council, PARAC, and Strategic Council members to fully refine and align program review with the district’s planning and resource allocation process.
OVERALL SUMMARY

Addressing these two recommendations over the past six months has challenged, exasperated, and inspired Sierra College to mature as an educational institution and develop an even stronger sense of common purpose. The robust dialogue exhibited during the resource prioritization discussions served to not only make district resource needs transparent, but they also actively engaged the college in a collaborative effort towards student success. Resource issues long buried were brought forward as compelling resource needs on the behalf of student success. This process has tested the decision-making abilities of the institution and its ability to seek and identify alternative funding sources.

Despite the impending fiscal crisis, Sierra College remains committed to this planning process. Although it is anticipated that new funds will be limited in 2009-2010 and nonexistent in 2010-2011, the identified district Tier 1 resource needs will guide the allocations of any new funds received, redirect and reallocate existing resources, identify areas for potential partnerships and future resource development as well as potential areas for budget reductions.

As stated in Sierra College’s 2007 Team Report,

*Its [Sierra College’s] sense of common purpose, collegiality, and optimism that reflects a resilient spirit, a pervasive commitment to student success, and an esprit de corps that are among the college’s best assets.*
LIST OF SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Recommendation 2b
- 01. Sierra College Mission Statement
- 02. Strategic Plan 2008-2011
- 03. Planning Calendar 6-15-09
- 04. Sierra College Compensation Agreement
- 05. Board Policy BP 6310
- 06. Board minutes July 11, 2009
- 07. PARAC Charter, July 27, 2009
- 08. PRC Executive Report 2009
- 09. Sierra College AP 2510
- 10. Deans’ Council Recap 10/1/09
- 12. Strategic Council Recollections
- 13. SCFA MOU 0809-03 4/7/09 (p. 26.1)
- 14. Sonbol Aliabadi email 9/1/09
- 15. 2008-2009 Strategic Plan Update – Key Metrics
- 16. 2010-2011 Principles, Priorities and Resource Allocation Criteria Draft
- 17. 2008-2009 Year End Goals Report

Recommendation 2d
- 18. Program Review templates 2009
- 19. A. Myers email 9/18/09
- 20. PARAC Recollections 8/19/09
- 21. Department Chair Agenda and Feedback, 8/24/09
- 22. ePAR Survey September 2009
- 23. Program Review Survey October 2009
- 25. Educational Master Plan Draft
- 26. Facilities Master Plan
- 27. Technology Master Plan
- 28. Human Resources Master Plan

Commission Recommendation 1
- 29. Academic Senate Recollections 3-4-09
- 30. Academic Senate Recollections 3-11-09
- 31. Academic Senate Recollections 3-18-09
## APPENDIX A

**ACCJC Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness – Part I: Program Review**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proficiency</th>
<th>Sierra College’s Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Review processes are in place and implemented regularly</td>
<td>• Program Review process revised and completed for all college programs in S’09. Programs placed on a regular review cycle of 1-3 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results of all program reviews are integrated into institution-wide planning for improvement and informed decision-making</td>
<td>• Results of program review published and submitted to planning and governance committees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The program review framework is established and implemented</td>
<td>• Program Review framework revised and implemented in S’09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Dialogue about the results of all program reviews is evident throughout the institution as part of discussion of institutional effectiveness | • Program Review findings published and presented various meetings including Academic Senate, Board of Trustees, Department Chairs, Deans’ Council, Planning and Resource Allocation, and Strategic Council.  
  • Department Chairs were asked to share Program Review findings with faculty and staff.  
| Results of program review are clearly and consistently linked to institutional planning processes and resource allocation processes; college can demonstrate or provide specific examples | • Program Review findings utilized in planning and establishing resource allocation by Deans’, PARAC and Strategic Council as evidenced in minutes of meetings. |
| The institution evaluates the effectiveness of its program review processes in supporting and improving student achievement and student learning outcomes | • Program Review processes undergo evaluation in fall of every year.  
  • Student Learning Committee tracks progress in SLOs and program outcomes and reports to the Program Review Committee. |

#### Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement

| Program review processes are ongoing, systematic and used to assess and improve | • Programs reviewed on a 1-3 year cycle.  
  • SLOs and Program Outcomes and |
| Student learning and achievement | Assessment data are uploaded into TracDat and incorporated into the program review process.  
• Within program review, programs are evaluated on the use of SLOs and program outcomes. (Rubric) |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The institution reviews and refines its program review processes to improve institutional effectiveness | Evaluations of most recent program review cycle to be distributed to all staff in September.  
• Program Review Committee will incorporate feedback received from evaluations to revise and refine process. |
| The results of program review are used to continually refine and improve program practices resulting in appropriate improvements in student achievement and learning. | Program Review results were distributed in July '09. Results contained future directions and suggestions for program improvement.  
• Programs will use results to inform assessment and improve current practices. |
## APPENDIX B
ACCJC Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness – Part II: Planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proficiency</th>
<th>Sierra College’s Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| The college has a well-documented, ongoing process for evaluating itself in all areas of operation, analyzing and publishing the results and planning and implementing improvements | • ePAR process established to track all unit goals, activities, allocations, and results.  
• Program Review process restructured and conducted in all areas of operation S’09. Results published and cycle reestablished.  
• Programs identified as “critical” for planning, resources, or both are scheduled for accelerated review and improvement plan F’09.  
• Annual planning process evaluation conducted.  
• Master Plan cycles established and updates calendared (chart).  
• Planning documents published on college website.  
• Course and program outcomes tracked, department goals linked to district goals, strategies, actions, and results.  
• Key metrics with targets for 2011 are updated annually.  
• District Factbook containing longitudinal date is published annually.  (Factbook)  
• Progress and activities in support of Strategic Goals tracked annually (spreadsheet) |
| The institution’s component plans are integrated into a comprehensive plan to achieve broad educational purposes and improve institutional effectiveness | • EMP, Strategic Plan, HR, Tech, and Facilities Plans updated and linked.  (spreadsheet showing linkage of plans) |
| The institution effectively uses its human, physical, technology, and financial resources to achieve its broad educational purposes, including stated learning outcomes | • Budget allocation decisions linked to strategic goals, strategies and department plans.  
• Additional full-time faculty hired, permanent staff preserved.  
• Course and program outcomes tracked, department goals linked to district goals, strategies, actions, and results.  
• Institutional outcomes written and included in EMP (Inst. SLOs) |
The college has documented assessment results and communicated matters of quality assurance to appropriate constituencies (documents data and analysis of achievement of its educational mission).

- Key metrics progress update shared with Board and Strategic Council. (Key metrics and activities chart as evidence)
- Program Review Executive Report published containing feedback for every Program Review submitted. (Program Review exec summary)
- District Factbook containing longitudinal date is published annually. (Factbook)
- Any SLO assessment data to include?

The institution assesses progress toward achieving its education goals over time (uses longitudinal data and analyses).

- Key metrics with targets for 2011 are updated annually.
- District Factbook containing longitudinal date is published annually. (Factbook)
- Program Review data baseline complete; cycle established. (PR exec summary)

The institution plans and effectively incorporates results of program review in all areas of educational services: instruction, support services, library and learning resources.

- Program Review conducted in all areas: instruction, support services, library and learning resources, administration, and operations.
- Results published and used in allocation decision process.
- Programs identified as “critical” for planning, resources, or both are scheduled for additional review and improvement plan F’09.

**Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement**

The institution uses ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning to refine its key processes and improve student learning.

- Annual process defined and implemented in which progress towards key metric targets for 2011 published (added a space between 2011 and “published”) and used to establish 2010-2011 budget priorities and planning principles. (planning criteria 10-11)
- Informal and formal evaluation of planning and program review processes occurs annually.

There is dialogue about institutional effectiveness that is ongoing, robust and pervasive; data and analyses are widely distributed and used throughout the institution.

- PARAC committee provides a venue for ongoing and focused dialogue on the improvement of institutional effectiveness and student learning; ensures that all planning efforts are linked to the college’s mission, vision, core values.
- Strategic Council conveys to the
Superintendent/President the views of the campus community on matters relevant to the strategic planning directions of the College; and assists in disseminating and interpreting policy, regulations and procedures to the various segments of the college community.

- Data and analyses are readily available on the Research and Planning website
- Student Learning Outcomes and assessment data for courses and programs readily available in web-based TracDat program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>There is ongoing review and adaptation of evaluation and planning processes.</th>
<th>Multiple informal reviews occurred this summer, with formal, regularized, reviews scheduled for September 2009.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| There is consistent and continuous commitment to improving student learning; and educational effectiveness is a demonstrable priority in all planning structures and processes. | District approved Strategic Plan 2008-2011 delineates educational effectiveness as one of the district’s four primary goals.  
• Progress towards Strategic Plan 2011 target metrics are assessed annually |
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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